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ABSTRACT

Designed to help students observe and learn about how they individually represent experience and assign meaning, the exercises in this paper are intended for use in courses on intrapersonal communication or in course units on cognitive aspects of communication. The journal exercise is described in terms of its goals, approaches to it, and includes some sample entries from student journals. Coding analysis (focusing on how a stimulus is represented in memory and the attributes that play a role in retention and retrieval) is the subject of exercises dealing with verbal, semantic, and visual coding. The verbal coding exercise contains goals, approach, materials, and an analysis. The paper presents an introduction, instructions, and a discussion with the visual coding exercise. Depth of processing (the idea that the more deeply we process stimuli, the more likely we are to remember those stimuli) is the subject of an exercise focusing on structural versus semantic analysis, with an introduction, goals, approach, as well as all materials necessary for the exercise. A 10-item bibliography concludes the paper. (SR)

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Intrapersonal Communication Activities: Representing Experience

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Running head: INTRAPERSONAL COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES

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Introduction

Definitions of intrapersonal communication vary, but all have in common the notion that intrapersonal communication is concerned with representing experience and assigning meaning (see, for instance, Roberts, Edwards, and Barker, 1987). The exercises proposed here are designed to help students to observe and to learn about how they represent experience and assign meaning.

The key to an effective course or unit on intrapersonal communication is student participation. In other words, the student will learn best when he or she actively processes the ideas presented. The metacognition involved in becoming aware of one's own processing itself facilitates learning. This is one of the most important lessons we learn from studying cognition. The student must apply the concepts learned, ask questions about them, intellectually wrestle with them, speculate about them, and observe their manifestation in his/her experience (see Popper, 1972). It is one thing to read about selective attention and quite another to "catch" oneself shifting attention in the course of a conversation; to know that words can be ambiguous and to experience ambiguity and alternative interpretations in

communication; to learn about emotions and to observe one's own emotional triggers and their effects upon reasoning (William James, 1890).

A central exercise below is The Journal. The Journal is an open ended record of any and all intrapersonal experiences which the student wishes to record. Some will find a theme which will underlie most of their entries and others will skip about, influenced by course materials and their own shifting focus. But, regardless of style, the student will find the journal extremely useful in bringing the course concepts alive, in finding an interesting topic for a term paper and in gaining a view of an often overlooked universe within, one with boundless possibilities.

The exercise titled Coding Analysis attempts to demonstrate that we represent information with various codes, phonological, semantic, and visual, to name a few. Moreover, we are capable of processing input to various levels or codes.

Finally, the exercise titled Depth of Processing demonstrates that we are able to process stimuli to various "depths" of analysis. Furthermore, the depth of analysis or the way in which information is represented in memory effects its accessibility.

Again, these activities may be useful for a course unit on cognitive aspects of communication or for a course on intrapersonal communication.

The Journal Exercise

Goals. The journal serves three main purposes:

(1) to motivate the student to observe him/herself;

(2) to increase awareness of and control over intrapersonal communication;

(3) to allow the student an unstructured arena in which to explore a wide range of intrapersonal behaviors, some of which are very private, e.g., emotions, attitudes, physiological reactions, confusions, etc.

Approach. Students are asked to keep an intrapersonal communication journal. They ought to use a separate notebook just for this purpose. They may wish to use one that allows them to remove pages to protect their privacy when the journal is handed in. The instruction for keeping the journal is simply to try to notice when you've

experienced an intrapersonal event and to write about it, describe it, discuss how it fit with the larger context and how it influenced behavior. As with most journals and relatively unstructured exercises, the beginning is slow and awkward, but there is a major payoff for giving each student room to find their intrapersonal communication. However, the process can be aided in a number of ways: (1) by devoting class time early in the semester to hearing from students about their journal entries; (2) by the teacher offering his/her own recent intrapersonal experiences, potential journal entries; (3) by providing ideas for journal topics, from readings, discussion, handouts (e.g., dreams, daydreams, emotional triggers, musical experiences, pain, smell, touch, physiological reactions, stress, associations, forgetting, selective attention, distractions, ambiguous interpretations, tip of the tongue experiences, feelings about yourself, self-dialogue, errors, sometimes "automatic" behaviors--like driving, thought during deep involvement in an activity, and others); (4) by supplying students with samples of student journal entries; and finally (5) by providing students with suggested structured exercises (for instance, see Barker and Edwards, 1980 ; or Dauw, 1980; or any of the exercise in this manual). But the key here is to get students writing and to give them some feedback to

let them know that they are on track; to let them know that it is airight to explore.

Below are some sample entries from student journals:

Listening, do I listen? Most times I do. Since Tuesday I have become so aware of my listening habits. I do get distracted in class by things I don't understand and my mind goes to things I do understand. The past three days I have become aware of how outside stimuli effects me when I'm in my car. How I react to the things they do that I think are stupid. I become angry, only for a few seconds, but angry none the less.

* * * * *

To some degree I have a low tolerance for ambiguity. I usually want clear-cut easily defined situations. I want to know where I stand and then I'll decide what I'll do about it.

On the locus of control my feelings are varied. I believe God has a plan for each of us but that I with Him

as the master of my fate, that certain changes can be made and I must accept the consequences of my decisions and if what happens is contrary to what I thought I wanted to adjust myself to that until another choice comes along. I would consider myself an internal because I do not believe outside forces can control my life. Rain, snow etc., but doesn't control what goes on inside me, my intrapersonal relationships.

* * * * * *

What a relief to find out I was not the only one who did not grasp what Condon is talking about. But even better than that to be told that concrete people have a problem with semantics. I've been doing such a mental put down on myself, thinking I was stupid, dumb, to the point of thinking maybe I should just leave school and get a job because I don't have what it takes to grasp this intellectual ideal. I didn't even admit to myself what I was doing to myself, or maybe I wasn't aware of what I was doing. It was as if a weight were lifted off me and once the fear of stupidity was removed, I could be objective. Not understanding one book does not make me stupid.

Coding Analysis

Introduction:

Coding analysis raises the fundamental question: What is it that gets learned.[1] That is to say, what aspects or features of a stimulus are involved in the learning. Or, put in other words, coding analysis focuses upon how a stimulus is represented in memory. It is concerned with the attributes that play a role in retention and retrieval. The following exercises help to show that we employ various codes in representing our experience and that these matter in how we retain and retrieve information. Moreover, it can be shown that the mode of presentation of the stimulus does not necessarily determine the code in which the stimulus is represented internally. That is to say, it can be shown that recoding or transformation of input occurs.

Verbal Codes

Phonological Coding in Immediate Memory

Goals. To show that the mode of stimulus presentation does not necessarily define the code for internal representation.

Approach. This exercise mimics a milestone study performed by Conrad (1964), in which subjects were presented with brief exposures of consonant letter arrays. Each trial consists of a brief exposure to a sequence of six consonant letters visually displayed. The subject's task is to take in the display silently and to recall the display in order after the display has disappeared, without any intervening activity. The students are asked to write their responses.

Materials:

The following sequences are written large enough for the whole class to see when they are held up briefly, i.e., long enough to read about once (roughly 3 seconds).

(1) B H K T C V

(2) B C T H V Z

(3) H B K L M W

(4) G F N L X H

Analysis

A look at errors in recall will help to demonstrate the nature of the internal code for representing the visual letter stimuli. It should be noted that the frequency of response is not the crucial data in this demonstration, but rather the nature of the errors. Substitution errors, i.e., when the correct letter for a given position was replaced with some incorrect letter, do not seem to be random. Substitution errors tend to consist of replacing the correct letter with another letter which is similar in sound. For instance, the letter T is likely to be replaced by the letter P, since the two letters rhyme. Furthermore, sequences which have a high proportion of rhyming letters, e.g., number 2 above, are harder to recall than sequences with few or no rhyming letters. Such findings have lead to the conclusion that immediate memory is closely tied to the hearing-speech (phonological) system. At the same time, note that this is not to claim that the phonological system is the only code possible here.

Semantic Coding

The Depth of Processing exercise (attached) demonstrates the influence of semantic vs. structural coding on retrieval.

Visual Coding

This simple task allows us to compare the speed and accuracy associated with visual vs. verbal coding. The task used here mimics a study carried out by Coltheart, Hull, and Slater (1975), in which subjects were asked to mentally scan the alphabet from beginning to end, looking, in one condition for letters with the sound "ee" or, in a second condition, looking for letters with a curved shape. Since being correct on the sounds is independent of visualizing the letters and since correctly judging the shape of the letter is independent of the letter's name, it was thought that these tasks reflect purely verbal and visual processing.

Instructions

When I say start, mentally scan the alphabet from A to Z, and count the number of letters with the sound "ee," as in the letter "E". Try to do this as quickly as possible, since I am timing you. When you are done, put up your hand, so that I will know when the last person is done. Write down the number you count and don't change it.

After the group completes this first task, they are informed that there is a second task. The second task asks the student to scan the same alphabet from A to Z as fast as possible counting the number of letters with a curved shape. They are to raise their hands when done since they are being timed.

Discussion

To begin with, it is not necessary to actually time the class. The appearance of timing the class is used because it helps to make people do the task as fast as they can (while still trying to be accurate). However, there is one predictable outcome of timing, and that is the longer time it takes for people to perform the visual task compared to the "auditory." It may be of some interest to look at male

vs. female scores on accuracy, since the original research paper by Coltheart, Hull, and Slater reported sex differences (with females more accurate on the verbal task and males more accurate on the visual task). Others (including this writer) have failed to replicate that finding. As for representational systems, discussion of the participants' experience in the two tasks is in order.

Finally, the scanning tasks open discussion about "task analysis," i.e., the idea that we can analyze tasks as consisting of constituent skills. For instance, we may speculate that scanning the alphabet for curves requires more skills than scanning the alphabet for sounds. The visual task may require both naming the letters during scanning to bring each to mind and visually scanning each to determine shape. The verbal task may not require the extra step of visualizing. Of course, what is important here is raising the idea of decomposing tasks into subskills.

Depth of Processing

Introduction

The idea that the way in which we approach information influences what we get from it, comes up repeatedly in the intrapersonal course. It is one thing to make this claim, however, and another to demonstrate it. Craik and Lockhart (1972) have demonstrated this point. They argue that the way in which we process stimuli is what is responsible for the persistence of the memory trace. They maintain that we process stimuli in a series of stages, from physical analysis to meaning. The more deeply we process stimuli, i.e., the more we elaborate meaning with associations, images, stories, ". . . on the basis of our past experience. . . ." (p. 675), the more likely we are to remember those stimuli. It may be speculated further that the task at hand, or our interest, or both, dictates the attention we pay to stimuli. And, of course, greater interest is likely to reflect greater knowledge about the stimuli, i.e., information already in memory. Craik and Lockhart were interested in the theoretical conflict between accounting for memory in terms of depth of processing vs. multiple storage systems. But for present purposes, depth of processing helps to raise the idea of stages of analysis

(recall the reference to Crowder, 1976). A primary distinction that can be made with regard to stages of analysis is between structural and semantic analysis. That is, we can focus upon the letters, sounds, or syntactic units of words (structural elements) or, we can focus upon the semantic component of words. In this exercise half of the class is instructed to monitor for structural features and the other half is instructed to monitor for semantic features. Then an unexpected recognition memory test is given to test for and (hopefully) demonstrate that more deeply processed items are more accurately remembered.

Goals. This exercise is to show that the way in which we approach stimuli and derive information from them affects what is stored away and, consequently, what is available to memory. This exercise helps to raise for discussion issues in mental dynamics, what we do with what's in memory, and it reinforces the idea that information processing is an active process. Furthermore, it raises the idea that the task influences cognitive behavior and therefore, outcomes.

Approach. Half of the class receives the test booklet, which appears below, with the instruction to scan for

words containing the letter A. The other half receives the test booklet with the instruction to scan for words that denote a living thing. The instructions appear on the first page of the booklet, so that the student does not know that others are performing a different task. Nor is the student aware that he/she is to be tested for recognition of list items in the second phase of this demonstration.[2]

Page 1 of the Exercise Booklet

Instructions

Form A.

When the signal to begin is given, turn to the next page where you will find a list of words. Your task is to scan the list of words as quickly as possible looking for words that contain the letter A. If the word contains an A, then circle the Y next to the word; if not, circle the N. When you complete the first page of words, go on to the next page and do the same thing. As soon as you complete this task, stop and look up to see the elapsed time, which will be written on the blackboard. Write down the time, which will tell us how long it took for you to complete the task.

When all the students are finished with this part of the exercise, distribute a recognition test for the words in the lists they just scanned. The recognition test is described below, following the lists for scanning.

Form B.

These instructions are identical to Form A above with the exception that the student is instructed to look for words that mean a living thing as opposed to words that contain the letter A.

Page 2 of the Exercise Booklet

electrode	Y N	warblers	Y N
bath	Y N	perch	Y N
blanket	Y N	scorpion	Y N
geranium	Y N	washer	Y N
frog	Y N	top	Y N
mussel	Y N	crochet	Y N
termite	Y N	engine	Y N

bye	Y N	man	Y N
container	Y N	camera	Y N
knitting	Y N	goose	Y N
shark	Y N	vice	Y N
railroad	Y N	llama	Y N
release	Y N	lobby	Y N
hide	Y N	numb	Y N
pocket	Y N	photography	Y N
gazelle	Y N	woodpecker	Y N
fat	Y N	ant	Y N
dolphin	Y N	swallow	Y N
squirrel	Y N	fever	Y N
pique	Y N	now	Y N
semicolon	Y N	mailbox	Y N
automobile	Y N	ostrich	Y N
brain	Y N	hate	Y N
muskrat	Y N	hamster	Y N
cylinder	Y N	primate	Y N

coal	Y N	fade	Y N
lizard	Y N	rooster	Y N
gibbon	Y N	shutter	Y N
web	Y N	book	Y N
machine	Y N	voltage	Y N
alphabet	Y N	rubber	Y N
spend	Y N	what	Y N
wrench	Y N	thrush	Y N
honeybee	Y N	kangaroo	Y N
drag	Y N	dress	Y N
cardinal	Y N	entrance	Y N

marsupial	Y N	anchor	Y N
bring	Y N	rude	Y N
bathtub	Y N	otter	Y N
osprey	Y N	tennis	Y N

want	Y N	sort	Y N
molding	Y N	sparrow	Y N
trombone	Y N	oyster	Y N
whale	Y N	old	Y N
lobster	Y N	jackal	Y N
manx	Y N	sailing	Y N
brown	Y N	cat	Y N
exhaust	Y N	holder	Y N
pizza	Y N	department	Y N
brow	Y N	goat	Y N
chicken	Y N	extreme	Y N
elephant	Y N	journal	Y N
name	Y N	pill	Y N
running	Y N	koala	Y N
porcupine	Y N	alligator	Y N
lath	Y N	nape	Y N
service	Y N	laughter	Y N

shortage	Y N	plunger	Y N
fox	Y N	mile	Y N
pheasant	Y N	vulture	Y N
stork	Y N	polar bear	Y N
fish	Y N	paint	Y N
maine	Y N	profit	Y N
connecticut	Y N	program	Y N
nail	Y N	horse	Y N
blackbird	Y N	tortoise	Y N
turkey	Y N	robin	Y N
late	Y N	calf	Y N
thermostat	Y N	starling	Y N
snake	Y N	indiana	Y N
cow	Y N	lose	Y N
platypus	Y N	ohio	Y N

Page 3 of the Exercise Booklet

Recognition

The following list consists of words, some of which were in the list that you just scanned, and some of which were not in the list. Please circle the words which you recognize from the list you scanned.

mouse	*mussel
*knitting	sewing
music	*pocket
canary	*swallow
then	*now
oat	*man
sapsucker	*warblers
*electrode	spectrum
*release	member

*gazelle	giraffe
*cylinder	*semicolon
*running	*brown
*tennis	*pill
*exhaust	*blanket
*honeybee	*fever
*railroad	partition
*termite	*washer
*chicken	*turkey
partridge	*robin
song	*service
vermont	*connecticut
partisan	*pheasant
*container	*automobile
*muskrat	*camera
mainstream	radio
*dolphin	*starling

*hide	*indiana
radiant	*porcupine
treatise	extract
trash	intern
*thermostat	*plunger
*blackbird	*vulture
*laughter	confront
*alligator	*perch
*elephant	*bye
*geranium	*holder
*top	*cat
*crochet	*ant
*pique	*brain
*bath	*ohio
*fox	*platypus
demean	dread
*fish	*scorpion

dream

*calf

*horse

*engine

*lobster

*wrench

menstrual

*manx

*trombone

*marsupial

square

*vice

*ostrich

spy

*photography

stick

guppy

*sort

*squirrel

*shark

*stork

*mailbox

*alphabet

*whale

*bathtub

*oyster

serpent

*osprey

*llama

*numb

*woodpecker

*frog

*sailing

*jackal

*old

*dress

*bring

*spend

*coal

*drag

*sparrow

*entrance

*kangaroo

*otter

*fade

*book

*what

crack

garbage

*thrush

*rude

*gibbon

*rooster

theory

*web

charm

*cardinal

dart

conifer

conflict

*primate

*voltage

crab

why

cradle

*rubber

*anchor

*lizard

*machine

*shutter

*molding

*name

*pizza

wing

*lath

*brow

*tortoise

*profit

*koala

*department

*lose

*mile

*snake

*iate

*goose

*hate

*goat

*maine

gnaw

*paint

*nail

money

*polar bear

*program

*extreme

*journal

*nape

make

*cow

*shortage

*hamster

*lobby

*The starred words do appear in the scanning lists. The stars are included here to aid scoring, but, of course, would not appear on the recognition tests.

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[1] See Crowder, 1976, chapter 1

[2] In addition to the work of Craik and Lockhart (1972), this exercise is indebted to Schulman (1971) for the procedures used here